

THE FOUNDATION SKILLS

by Lawrence K. Jones

The 17 Foundation Skills are those required of *all* workers in the high-performance workplace of the 21st century. They are grouped in four clusters:

BASIC SKILLS

Reading:

1. Identify relevant details, facts, and specification in what is being read;
2. Locate information in books and manuals, from graphs and schedules;
3. Find meaning of unknown or technical words and phrases;
4. Judge accuracy of reports; and
5. Use computer to find information.

Writing:

1. Communicate thoughts, ideas, information, and messages in writing;
2. Record information completely and accurately;
3. Create documents, including letters, manuals, reports, and graphs;
4. Check, edit, and revise documents for correct information, appropriate emphasis, grammar, spelling, and punctuation; and
5. Use computers to communicate information.

Mathematics:

1. Use numbers, fractions, and percentages to solve practical problems;
2. Make reasonable estimates of arithmetic results without calculator;
3. Use tables, graphs, diagrams, and charts to obtain numerical information;
4. Use computers to enter, retrieve, change, and communicate numerical information; and
5. Use computers to communicate data, choosing the best form to present data (e.g., line or bar graph, pie charts).

Speaking:

1. Organize ideas and communicate oral messages appropriate to listener and situations;

2. Select appropriate language, tone of voice, gestures, and level of complexity appropriate to audience and occasion;
3. Speak clearly; ask questions when needed.

Listening:

1. Listen carefully to what a person says, noting tone of voice and other body language to understand content and feelings being expressed; and
2. Respond in a way that shows understanding of what is said.

THINKING SKILLS

Creative Thinking:

1. Use imagination freely, combining ideas or information in new ways; and
2. Make connections between ideas that seem unrelated.

Problem-Solving Skills:

1. Recognize problem, a gap between what is and what should or could be;
2. Identify why it is a problem;
3. Create and implement a solution; and
4. Watch to see how well solution works and revise if needed.

Decision Making Skills:

1. Identify the goal desired in making the decision;
2. Generate alternatives for reaching the goal;
3. Gather information about the alternatives (e.g., from experts or books);
4. Weigh the pros and cons of each alternative (i.e., gains/losses to yourself and others, approval/disapproval of self and others);
5. Make the best choice; and
6. Plan how to carry out your choice and what you will do if negative consequences occur.

Visualization:

1. See a building or object by looking at a blueprint, drawing, or sketch; and
2. Imagine how a system works by looking at a schematic drawing.

PEOPLE SKILLS

Social:

1. Show understanding, friendliness, and respect for the feelings of others;
2. Assert oneself appropriately, stand up for yourself and your ideas in a firm, positive way; and
3. Take an interest in what people say and why they think and act as they do.

Negotiation:

1. Identify common goals among different parties in conflict and the ways they depend on each other;
2. Clearly present the facts and arguments of your own position;
3. Listen to and understand other party's position; and
4. Create and propose possible options for resolving the conflict, making reasonable compromises.

Leadership:

1. Communicate thoughts and feelings to justify a position;
2. Encourage, persuade, or convince individuals or groups;
3. Make positive use of rules (e.g., "Robert's Rules of Order") or values of the organization;
4. Exhibit ability to have others believe in and trust you due to your competence and honesty.

Teamwork:

1. Work cooperatively with others; contribute to the group with ideas and effort;
2. Do own share of tasks necessary to complete project;
3. Encourage team members by listening to them, providing support, and offering tips for success, as appropriate;
4. Resolve differences for the benefit of the team; and
5. Responsibly challenge existing procedures, policies, or authorities.

Cultural Diversity:

1. Work well with people having different ethnic, social, or educational backgrounds;

2. Understand the concerns of members of other ethnic and gender groups;
3. Base impressions on a person's behavior, not stereotypes;
4. Understand one's own culture and those of others and how they differ; and
5. Respect the rights of others while helping them make cultural adjustments where necessary.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

Self-Esteem:

1. Understand how beliefs affect how a person feels and acts;
2. Listening to what you say to yourself to identify any irrational or harmful beliefs you may have; and
3. Understand how to change these negative beliefs when they occur.

Self-Management:

1. Assess your own knowledge and skills accurately;
2. Set well-defined and realistic personal goals; and
3. Monitor your progress toward your goals.

Responsibility:

1. Give a high level of effort toward reaching goals,
2. Work hard to become excellent at job tasks. Pay attention to details. Concentrate at doing tasks well, even unpleasant ones; and
3. Display high standards of attendance, honesty, energy, and optimism.

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